CROSS ROADS

ume 25 May, 1950 Number 4

The Journal of The Rural Workers' Fellowship

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The Journal of the Rural Workers' Fellowship of the Episcopal Church. Formerly published as the Rural Messenger

The Objectives of the R. W. F.

1. To promote the interest of the whole Church in developing an effective ministry to town and country areas.
2. To increase fellowship among rural workers and those interested in rural community life; and
3. To aid the National Council in its program and its service to rural workers.

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Editor: The Rev. Maxwell Brown. Editorial Board: The Chairman of the Joint Commission on Rural Work (The Rt. Rev. Wm. W. Horstick); Dr. William V. Dennis; Mrs. Clifford Samuelson.

EDITORIAL

INDICATING ITS CONSTANT DESIRE to maintain programs and policies consistent with the thinking and the desires of the workers in the field, the National Council's Division of Town and Country established a new pattern in the National Conference held in April 12-14 in Salt Lake City. Nearly 70 delegates appointed by their respective Bishops gathered at St. Paul's Church to aid in formulating programs and policies for the national church, and to make recommendations to provinces and dioceses. The three days were filled with challenging messages, keen debate, good thinking. The tentative conclusions will be further examined by continuing commissions, and finally will be given to the Church in some printed form.

It is from such enriching conferences as these (despite the tiresome schedule maintained) that comes the forward looking town and country program of our Church. We can take charitable pride in the fact that the direction we receive from our national headquarters will take no second seat to any other church group. We can also be happy that the money expended by the Town and Country Division is so expertly invested, and brings such good results. The itemized budget that Clifford Samuelson is always ready to present for examination shows that much forethought goes into the spending of the money you and I urge our people to give on the missions side of their envelope.

While the results of the conference will be in your hands sometime in the near future, it will be well to give here some important statements. The conference opened with the startling revelation by Clifford Samuelson that more than half the Episcopal parishes and missions in this country are in towns of less than ten thousand population. While it is true that three-quarters of our members live in urban areas, the mere fact that we are on the "ground-floor" of a rapidly growing segment of American life—the smaller town, gives us an amazing challenge and an unequalled opportunity. It is enough to cause us all to re-examine our present programs and policies for parish extension.

We were further challenged by the Executive Secretary of our Division of Town and Country when he gave us four objectives for our work:

1. To provide a pastoral ministry, and the Sacraments, to people in rural America, containing in our ministry all types of Christian educational processes.

2. To evangelize and win to Christian conviction and Church membership the vast unchurched group in town and country areas of America.

3. To serve the people and the community by bringing Christian witness to all aspects of rural life.

4. To extend, establish, develop, and strengthen the organized work of the Church in all town and country areas.

The various commissions appointed thoroughly examined the means at our disposal for attaining these ends. When the complete report is published by the Division it will be well worth your deep study and prayer.

SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING. The twenty-sixth annual meeting of the Rural Workers' Fellowship was held during the same week that the National Episcopal Conference on Town-Country Work was meeting. As a result the attendance at the annual meeting of the R.W.F. was very representative.

Because of extreme lack of time, only necessary business was presented to the assembly. It is the hope of the board of Directors that next year some arrangements can be made to have a longer meeting period in order to bring to the assembly a number of items some of the members had desired to have discussed. It might be remarked, in passing, that the reasons for the shortness of time were evident to all in attendance, and it was with common understanding that our annual meeting was expedited so that the National Conference could have more time for the valuab'e sessions it was sponsoring. Usually the National Conference is held for a period of two weeks. This year because of the nature of the Conference, as explained in the March News Letter, everything was condensed into three days.

ELECTION RESULTS: The assembly elected to the Board of Directors for three years the Rev. Dargan Butt and the Rev. Shelby Walthall. Mrs. John Philbrick, of Parkville, Mo., was elected as Secretary-Treasurer. The other officers were re-elected.

OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS: The Prayer Cycle was highly commended, but because of our increased number of members it was voted to print it in a larger edition every four months. The meeting also voted to have the Diocese of the members listed after their names in the Prayer Cycle.

The present policies of the Board of Directors and the Officers were commended, and were urged to be continued. The date and

place for the 1951 Annual meeting was left to the decision of the Board of Directors.

RURAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS were announced at the Corporate Communion of the R.W.F. held in St. Paul's Church Friday, April 14. The names of those receiving the award, and their citations are found elsewhere in this issue.

MANY OF OUR RURAL PARISHES have already launched their Lord's Acre project for this year. Capt. Robert C. Jones, Church Army, has made an outstanding success of this project in the mission he serves at Hillman, Michigan. In this issue Captain Jones gives us his philosophy of the Lord's Acre project, and the reasons more of them should be sponsored by rural parishes.

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING your president gave a message on the history, achievements, failures, plans and policies of the R.W.F. The paper is printed in this issue in a condensed form. Credit should be given to Deaconess Seymour for compiling the historical data for the R. W. F. used in the talk. Deaconess Seymour gathered the history when she served as Second Vice President, and it is very complete. The history is under the care of our present holder of that office, and it is one of his duties to keep it up to date.

WE ARE INCLUDING IN THIS ISSUE, by permission, a reprint from the Coleman, Texas, Daily Democrat-Voice. It is an interesting story that appealed to Shelby Walthall, who sent it on to us. It is doubly interesting because of the name of the community. But the main reason we print it is not that it tells a success story of what a small rural community can do. We print it mainly because it points out a lesson to all who are active in church work. In this small community it is noted that the 4-H and the school and the parents moved to solve a problem. The church was there, but the story merely mentions the church. Evidently it offered no leadership to meet a serious community need. We can take a lesson from this story. How many small towns do we know that have a similar problem to that which bothered Cross Roads, Texas? Do we have a mission there? Or some church families? If it can be done in this small town in Texas, it can be done elsewhere. But surely the Church ought to take the leadership. That is one of our opportunities and privileges, and certainly a way in which we can help the community in which we have our work.

FIVE RECEIVE RURAL FELLOWSHIP AWARD

One of the highlights of the annual meeting, and of the National Conference, came at the R.W.F. Corporate Communion service when the Rural Fellowship Award was given to five men in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the work of the Church in town-country areas. Bishop Horstick, Honorary President of the R.W.F. was the celebrant at the service, assisted by the President, the Rev. Maxwell Brown, and the First Vice President, the Rev. Shelby Walthall.

Those receiving the award for 1950, and their citations are:

THE REV. WILLIAM CHRISTIAN

For many years a pastor and a friend to the Oneida Indians in Wisconsin, where he has devoted his life to the establishing and maintaining of a truly rural work among a minority group; who by personal leadership and devotion has given strength and guidance to the development of the Town and Country Department of the Fifth Province; a priest who loves the rural life, and a worthy recipient of this award.

WILBUR COCHEL

A devoted layman of the Church; a friend of the soil and the souls of rural people; who seeing their problems has sought to find the answers by teaching in agricultural colleges, by serving as editor of one of the great rural weeklies, by practicing with his own farmers what he has constantly preached, and by assuming leadership and making possible through a generous gift of his farm and endowments and continued interest much of the forward looking program of our Church today. A sincere Christian, worthy of this award.

THE RT. REV. MALCOLM E. PEABODY

The Bishop of Central New York's concern for the village and country churches of his diocese is genuine, self-sacrificing, and a large part of his broader program for developing his diocese. His experiments with the "team" idea for staffing rural churches; his interest in fostering the various conferences for rural workers; his recent intensive survey of his diocese in which the closest study of the rural situation was made are outstanding contributions to progress in the field of rural church work. A Bishop truly deserving this award.

THE REV. RICHARD R. PRICE

As a priest, he has brought to a ministry of over twenty years not only the practical business experience of his earlier life as a layman, but also his devotion to our Lord, and His love for people. Reflecting our Master's love for people,

he has ministered to them wherever they were found . . . in lonely and isolated places on ranches, and in the small towns of Montana. In the evening of his ministry he now continues to extend his influence beyond those whom duty has called him to serve, and by choice he has returned to the mission field in a small town from a parish in a larger city. Devoted to the cause of extending the Kingdom in small town and open country, he is a worthy recipient of the Rural Fellowship Award.

THE REV. CANON ERNEST B. SMITH

Both in the Canadian and the American Church, Canon Smith has done an outstanding piece of work as a rural pastor, and particularly in his present post where he has reopened a field long dormant, and for a man now nearly 75 has given impressive and effective leadership. He voluntarily relinquished in 1947 the rectorate of St. Paul's Bellingham, which he had built into one of the largest parishes in the Diocese, partly because of age, but also because, very largely, of the field white unto the harvest which stretches for 80 odd miles north and east of Bellingham. His ministry, although both rural and urban at different times, has never fallen into either of the strict categories into which the Church's works so often falls. When rector of an urban parish, he has had constantly in view the rural field tributary to the town. In the words of his Bishop "he has done more for his diocese in shaping and forming a realistic policy toward rural work than anyone else, priest or layman." It is a fitting observance of his 75 years of life and his 50 years of the priesthood that he worthily receives this award.

HELPFUL BULLETINS ON THE RURAL CHURCH

Through arrangements offered by Dr. Ralph A. Felton of Drew Theological Seminary we present the following bulletins edited by him. By placing your order through CROSSROADS the R.W.F. will receive a small financial contribution which will be added to our treasury. The last two bulletins are new and have not been reviewed. In general, however, the Felton Bulletins have much useful information for rural workers, and contain within the studies good ideas for furthering rural church work.

ONE FOOT ON THE LAND. Stories of 16 successful Rural Church, nine of which are in the South. 96 pp. 1 copy .30c; 4 copies $1.00.

THE HOME OF THE RURAL PASTOR. A study of 1,171 parsonages. Contains suggestions for improving the houses, and also plans for new ones. 70 photographs, 112 pp. 1 copy .40c; 3 copies $1.00.

THE CHURCH AND THE LAND. A study of 412 families showing the relation of Land Ownership, Soil Conservation, the Standard of Living and Church activities. 44 pp. 1 copy .25c; 5 copies $1.00.

THESE MY BRETHREN. A study of 1,542 Negro families and 570 Negro churches in the rural South. 104 pp. 1 copy .40c; 3 copies $1.00.

NEW MINISTERS. A study of 1,973 ministerial students. Helpful to pastors and Sunday school teachers in enlisting young men for the ministry. 32 pp. 1 copy .15c; 10 copies $1.00.

THE RURAL CHURCH ALIVE

By Robert C. Jones, C. A.

Today the statesmen of many Church groups are engaged in planning and executing enlarged and intensified programs for the rural church. This is imperative, otherwise the rural church may disappear from the rural scene and be replaced by a godlessness now evident in much of our American life. The rural religious situation is serious, bordering on crisis, and there must be work and imagination expended in its cause during the next decade. We are desperately in need of the general application of a sound rural program. That such a program is possible has been demonstrated in those areas where an intelligent and creative work has been inaugurated and maintained. The results speak for themselves, for there has been a revival and upsurge in the practice of religion. Such a program is bred upon religion applied to life in all its phases, such as education, recreation, labor, art, and economics. If this is not done then such work is not permanent because it is not relevant to rural life. Thus any intensified and enlarged rural religious program cannot be divorced from the rural scene of this age. The old program, the old concepts do not work. This, of course, means specialized training and leadership if it is to be done.

We begin such a program with the belief that Christianity is relevant to rural life now. This can be demonstrated in innumerable ways but among the most spectacular is "The Lord's Acre Movement." The Rev. Dumont Clarke, of North Carolina, has pioneered in this, and its success is tribute to his imagination and unceasing effort. In fact, any forward and intensified program involving the open country church must take into consideration this concept of stewardship, because it may well be that survival or rebirth of the rural church may depend upon some aspect of The Lord's Acre Movement. This plan identifies the Church with the work and livelihood of the people whom it serves. In this program there is the vital and happy relationship of worship and work. Men have always loved and preserved sacrificially that which they have created with their hands and especially is this true when that which is created is good and has both purpose and meaning. So while the financial gains are important, the spiritual implications and benefits far outweigh these outward advantages.

The basic problem of the rural church is one of adequate financial support. Inadequate support invariably means run-down and limited facilities, small stipends, poor leadership, irregular services

and ministrations, and finally the desertion of another rural area to the forces of paganism.

The value of a farm program for Calvary Church, Hillman, is evident. Here was another neglected church, run down, without leadership, and rapidly losing hope. It was exerting little influence in the community, yet there was a great potential man power that could be developed. The Church had existed because of the faithful labors of a group of women while the men stood idly by. How to use them was the problem. Whatever they were asked to do had to be worthy of their efforts and in terms of work they knew how to do. A Church Farm Program patterned on The Lord's Acre Movement was inaugurated. The response was tremendous. Soon every man of the congregation was at work. Some raised pigs, others cut and baled hay, still others plowed and worked and finally planted 14 acres in wheat and vetch. The total farm income for 1949 was approximately $1,200.00 with the wheat and vetch still to be harvested this fall. The success of the program has resulted in a permanent Farm Committee who at present are seeking land that could be purchased and farmed regularly by the men of the Church.

The Church has taken on new meaning and importance for these men. Worship is no longer something alien to their daily work. Their toil, as it were, has been sanctified because it is dedicated to God and they now share actively in the support of His work. The Church has gained favorable publicity and considerable respect in the eyes of other men in the area, for here is the church at work. It has not interfered with the regular weekly giving, but rather stimulated it. The Church for many years previous to 1946 had existed with an annual budget of approximately $150.00. The total income in 1949 was nearly $5,000. Such an increase is not due to the Farm Program alone, but it is one of the factors which has helped to create a growing church.

The life of a rural church is just as vigorous and effective as it is related directly to the life and land of the area. Just how involved in this Church Farm Program a minister should be is still debatable and will vary in each situation. But the Church Farm Program is one of those imaginative rural programs called for by the statesmen of the church today. When the church in the rural areas of America will express religion in terms of life, then we will be well on the road toward the establishment of The Christian Gospel in the fields that are ripe for the harvest.

THE RURAL WORKERS' FELLOWSHIP IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

By The Rev. Maxwell Brown

A study of the history of rural work in the Episcopal Church during the past thirty years reveals that the R.W.F. and the national and provincial work in our Church grew simultaneously, and were thoroughly intertwined and inter-dependent upon each other. In 1920 the National Council was organized, and by 1921 the Department of Christian Social Service was seriously concerned with rural work. Dean Lathrop, the department head, organized various conferences on the subject, and in 1924 secured the services of the Rev. F. D. Goodwin as the first Secretary of the Division of Rural Work. The informal contact with the University of Wisconsin's Rural Pastor's Conference, established in 1922, was developed into an official National Episcopal Conference of Rural Workers insofar as our Church was concerned. The National Conference has met annually ever since. In 1924 the Rural Worker's Fellowship was organized at Madison, Wisconsin at the National Conference, mainly through the efforts of the Rev. Val Sessions of Mississippi. The Rural Messenger was established as an official organ. For many years the Department of Christian Social Service contributed to the support of this project. The Fellowship stated in ts original by-laws its purpose to be:

1. To promote the interest of the whole ministry to the Church in Rural Communities.
2. To increase the fellowship among those interested in such services.
3. To aid the National Council in its service to the rural field and workers.

The first president of the R.W.F. was the Rev. Jules L. Prevost of Glenloch, Pa. The first Secretary-Treasurer was the Rev. Oscar Meyer of Oxford, N. Y. An executive committee was appointed the second year composed of one man from each province: The Rev. Messers: H. J. Edwards, Redding Ridge, Conn; E. S. Ford, Sparta, N. J.; Wm. McClelland, East New Market, Md.; V. H. Sessions, Bolton, Miss.; Wm. J. Vincent, Lapeer, Mich.; E. W. Couper, Minneapolis, Minn.; H. H. Marsden, St. Charles, Mo.; and M. M. Goldie, Cove, Oregon. The Rev. Val Sessions was editor of the Rural Messenger. The following prayer, written by the Rev. Theodore S. Will was adopted.

"Blessed Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd of the sheep; whose flocks are upon a thousand hills, Who hast put into our hearts the hope of a better country, even a heavenly; Grant that we may lift up our eyes and look on the field, white unto the harvest; Bless

all who search for Thy flocks in scattered places, that we may fetch them home to Thee, Who art with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever one God, World without end. Amen."

The Division of Rural Work continued an active program under the Rev. F. D. Goodwin, and his successors, the Rev. H. W. Foreman and the Rev. Goodrich R. Fenner. The R.W.F. continued to receive subsidy, and in turn, gave moral and spiritual support to the national program. The Madison conferences were held annually. In 1934 because of a greatly truncated budget the Division was abolished, and the Dept. of Christian Social Service through its secretary, the Rev. Almon R. Pepper continued as best it could the work of rural church promotion.

The rural work program of National Council and the R.W.F. were very closely affiliated. The R.W.F. was not an organization which held funds or had a definite executive program It was for the most part the radiation of that spirit for rural advance coming from the field. Since membership in the R.W.F. and the National Conference was almost identical, the Findings of the Conference and the program of the Rural Division expressed the feelings of the Fellowship. The R.W.F. was loosely knit, and yet for reasons of mutual expression and spiritual growth, the Fellowship idea persisted throughout the years, bound together through the quarterly publication The Rural Messenger. The men most active on the national scene for the promotion of rural work were active in the Fellowship.

Probably the most valuable part of the R.W.F. program was The Rural Messenger, yet it was at the same time the cause of continuous worry during and following the depression years. After 1932, the subsidy of the National Council was never sufficient to pay the total printing costs, and the Fellowship often was hard pressed to meet the deficit. The Rev. John Pickells in 1934 pointed out another weakness when he stated that many people thought they were merely subscribing to a paper and were unacquainted with the group idea behind it. "To those of us who have met from time to time in Madison," he said, "the Rural Messenger is the expression of the Fellowship and the Fellowship is the big thing."

In 1940 the Fellowship went through trying times. Membership, always a rather tenuous thing, was small. This was caused through the method used to obtain members, mainly collecting dues from those attending the Madison Conference. The old-guard of the R.W.F. with their enthusiasm and promotion of the **idea** of fellowship were rapidly passing from the picture. The burden

of financial difficulties, the lack of direct leadership from the national Church, which was itself going through the problems of reorganizing, the development of hostilities in Europe all played a factor in this difficult time. Another cause of trouble lay in the fact that issues of the Rural Messenger continued to be mailed to past members who had not paid their dues for many years. After a grand past, the R.W.F. was in 1940-1941 in a low ebb.

II. Rejuvenation

The annual meeting in 1941 started the revival of the R.W.F. as a potent factor in the life of the Church. The National Council had re-organized, and rural work was now under the Department of Domestic Missions, with a new assistant secretary chosen to devote part of his time to the promotion of rural work. A forward step was taken when the R.W.F. voted to affiliate with the Christian Rural Fellowship and arrangements made to receive the latter's publications. New officers were elected, and a resolution was passed praising generously the faithful old-guard who had carried on so valiently.

At this meeting arrangements were made effecting The Rural Messenger. The Home Department assumed financial responsibility for the magazine, in which they were to be reimbursed whenever possible by some amount from the Fellowship. The mailing list was jumped to 2,500 which was roughly the number of persons, lay and clergy, who were then working in the town-country fields of our Church. The new issues were larger, and had a new format. For a number of years the Messenger was to carry material found nowhere else in Church publications. The identity of the R.W.F. with the publication, while not lost in the new arrangement, was definitely secondary. The Messenger became, and rightly so, a journal for the National Council's program for advancing rural work.

The Madison meetings continued. There was always an official R.W.F. day. Membership dues were still collected at the annual meeting. But there was beginning to dawn upon the group present that the R.W.F. would never be a virile organization unless it had a better organizational plan.

In 1946 the annual meeting heard the report of a committee appointed a few years before to study the values that might be obtained through the incorporation of the R.W.F. as a non-profit institution. The annual meeting gave its approval, and machinery was set in motion for this purpose.

III. Incorporation

The meeting of 1947 was held in Parkville, Mo., because changes in administration at Madison had terminated that long relationship. The R.W.F. had become incorporated during the year, and now had definite means whereby it could avoid the troubles of the past, namely, financial difficulties and weak membership ties. New stability in the organization was soon evident. The voting practice was changed. Previously all persons attending the National Conference, and who attended the annual meeting of the R.W.F. were allowed to vote. In the future only members whose dues had been paid were allowed to vote either in person or by proxy. A Board of Directors was elected, consisting of six members holding office on the rotating plan for three year terms. A new Constitution and new By-laws were adopted to direct the organization's future.

The Home Department was still willing to subsidize the R. W.F., and continued to pay for nearly all costs of the Rural Messenger. The Journal continued along the same policies established in 1942. But complications were again arising. By this time the Messenger repeated considerably the context of the new promotional magazine of the Church, entitled Churchways. It also repeated somewhat the materials in the publications of the Christian Rural Fellowship, and the magazine Town and Country Church. These allied publications were sent out under the combined mailing list of the Messenger to all R.W.F. members as well as to hundreds of others. There was no one person responsible for these difficulties. The shortage of personnel and added responsibilities caused by the war were felt in the Home Department as elsewhere. Issues often had to be made up in a hurry in order to retain the postal permit. The Post Office complained of late mailings. The third complication was one that had bothered the magazine and the R.W.F. before. The journal was sent to hundreds of people who neither paid dues to the R.W.F. nor were aware of the purposes of the organization. As a result the Messenger had practically ceased to be a voicepiece of the Fellowship. And one "sales talk" for joining the R.W.F.—namely that the $2.00 dues paid for the Messenger as well as the other publications, had very little weight when hundreds of town-country workers received the publications through the National Council anyway.

The organization was growing, however. And under its new policies additional changes continued to strengthen the group. The

establishment in 1947 of the Rural Fellowship Award was one of the splendid contributions the organization has made to the town-country church. The First Vice President was given responsibility for membership promotion. The Second Vice President was to be the historiographer, to which duties were added in 1949 the organizing and publishing of the Cycle of Prayer for the R.W.F.. Provincial diocesan and regional R.W.F. branch groups were organized, under official charter from the Board of Directors. The annual meeting in 1949 voted to discontinue the Messenger, and in its place is printed two journals: Crossroads, being a magazine devoted to articles of interest and education; and the informal News Letter which carries chatty items of general news interest.

The Fellowship today, while still receiving a subsidy from the Division of Town and Country, as indeed it may always, is nevertheless now totally responsible for its own publications and policies. The Prayer Cycle, Crossroads, The News Letter are its own children. When a members pays his two dollar membership dues, fifty cents of that goes to pay for publications he receives during the year from the Christian Rural Fellowship. Seventy cents goes to pay for a subscription to Town and Country Church. The balance covers most of the publication expenses for our own journals. It is our friends who join us as contributing or sustaining members, or patrons, plus our subsidy from "281" that have kept us in the 'black" for the past two years. This is something the R.W.F. has not generally enjoyed for a number of years.

The fact that our membership has grown rapidly this past year, with a total of 117 new members this past ten months, indicates our policies are meeting good acceptance. Couple this with the fact that we have lost very few of our old members, plus the realization that we have had in many cases to resell the idea of paying dues annually to the Fellowship, will give some conception of the new strength and vitality we enjoy.

Above all we are constantly aware of our "fellowship," through our Prayer Cycle as well as our journals. The sense of spiritual relationship is a strong binding force within the R.W.F. today.

We can see, then, that the R.W.F. and the National Council's program for rural work has grown side by side, mutually supporting each other in their respective programs and policies. We can most surely say that without the help from National Council there

would be no Fellowship. Yet, we can just as assuredly say that without that bond of spiritual fellowship expressed in the annual meetings, nurtured by the R.W.F. publications, enriched by the devoted efforts of R.W.F. leaders, the program for town and country work that the National Council offered would not have enjoyed success. We can rejoice in the leadership from both groups.

We realize, too, that our organization before its incorporation had the inherent danger of no continuing strength. It continued only because its leadership was strong. When financial instability and other causes made for a period of weakness, it was the idea of and expression of fellowship that greatly aided in recovery.

That the R.W.F. is recognized as a needed organization is evident in the policy of the Home Department in continually supporting it and seeking, in turn, its support. The relationship between the Division of Town and Country and the R.W.F. is now and always has been a healthy relationship. Both need the other. It may be likened unto a body and its bloodstream. The body (the Division of T. & C.) is nourished by the bloodstream (the R.W.F.) The latter reaches down into every cell of the body to nourish it with prayer and fellowship and the educational and stimulating articles it publishes. The body does the work of promoting, growing, acting, expanding. It is the natural outlet of the energies of the cells of the body. Regardless of changing needs and new opportunities or problems, we know there is something in rural work that will continue to function. It is the bond of fellowship and mutual enterprise and interest expressed through the R.W.F. that in the long-run is stronger than any program or leadership. The Rural Workers' Fellowship is the voice of the town-country church. It is the medium of individual and united expression of the town-country workers. We cherish our past as it has developed, sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly, but mainly because our present is the natural outgrowth of a felt need expressed by hundreds of town-country workers and their friends. We cherish our close relationship with "281" and more recently with provincial rural departments, mutually supporting each other, striving to increase the mind of the Church towards its opportunities in the town-country field. Each of us have had our own particular type of ministry, our God-given privilege, our task to perform. And under God we shall continue our ministry, doing all things that are pleasing in His sight.

A SMALL GROUP WITH BIG VISION

By Mrs. Sid S. Smith

It's a spring night out in the country. The breezes blow softly and the chores are done. You are 12 years old. You go outside after the work is finished and feel the springtime, vigorous, in your bones. You want to do something, go somewhere. You kick a pebble with your foot and chase up and down the road a while with your collie. But that's not enough . . . . .

When it's springtime in the country and you're a little girl seven years old, you feel kind of unhappy sometimes. You'd like to put on a party dress and tie a ribbon in your hair. You'd like to be somewhere where there are lots of lights . . . . .

Springtime can be rugged if you're a boy or girl 16 years old. You smell the sweet air, watch the curve of moon come up in the sky. You can't settle down to reading or the radio. You want to go to town, to a movie, to the drug store, to a party . . . . .

It's not always easy to be a parent in the springtime either. You feel the restlessness of your children. You want to help them, but you don't know how. So you don't do anything.

That is, if you're an ordinary group of parents, you let the matter slip by.

But if you're part of the Cross Roads Community—well, that's a different thing. Then you take the challenge, examine it, and proceed to do something about it.

And that is just what a group of Cross Roads parents did in 1948 when they saw their children growing restless and unhappy, when they heard them beg night after night to be allowed to come to a movie.

As one parent said, "We lived with our hearts in our mouths. The children were out on the highways alone late at night, and we worried. Besides, our community wasn't holding together as it should, and we began to decide that we'd have to take a hand in changing things around."

That's the background story of how Cross Roads Community Center was reborn.

Cross Roads is, as its name implies, a small community back from the road. The school there is nice. So is the church, and the houses have yards and little flower gardens and bicycles on the porches. But there are no shows or stores to draw the children.

Facing the situation, the members of the Cross Roads group meant doing something about it. One afternoon in March, 1948, the parents and the children's teachers met together in the classroom.

If the children needed entertainment and group play, the parents would give it to them. A baseball team was organized; and when the parents won a score, it was as likely as not the kids were laughing to see Mom jumping for a fly ball or Dad sliding into home.

Baseball was fun, but it wasn't enough to win a game unless you could celebrate it somehow. Thus the children began to ask for parties.

Noting the diversity of ages, the parents wracked their brains for suitable party games for all the children so that what would be fun to a six-year-old wouldn't be boring to a teen-ager.

They rummaged in the attics of their minds and came up with some game relics from grandmother's days. Then they began to have indoor fun together.

The 4-H Club group and county agent worked closely with the Cross Roads' parents to stimulate the kind of interest the parents wanted for their children.

Even before the baseball games began, the children of Cross Roads who were in the 4-H program became vitally interested in such simple folk dances as "Virginia Reel" and "Lady Around Lady." By selling candy and drinks, the boys and girls raised enough money to buy records for their dancing.

By the time Christmas of 1948 came around, the Cross Roads group was ready to offer entertainment for the 4-H Clubs of Coleman county. They did so well, they participated in a county-wide 4-H party during National 4-H Week. As a result of that, the group had a program on Radio Station KSTA.

Cross Roads began to be known throughout the county. Many of the boys and girls were chosen to attend county, state, and regional training camps where they learned handicraft, nature study, folk dancing, and community cooperation. These boys and girls returned to their small town eager to share what they had learned. As a result the Cross Road club has won numerous honors in county and state recreation contests.

So many parents at Cross Roads became interested that they and the 4-H group organized a joint club known as the "Texas

Star Club." They have put on home-talent plays and have taken the money to buy leather craft tools and records for the children.

It's a May night out at Cross Roads. It will probably be a soft spring evening this Thursday. The winds blow softly. You are 12 years old, and you're busy getting your chores done because this is party night.

It's springtime at Cross Roads, and you are only seven. You skip along the road, hurrying home. You want to brush your hair and tie a ribbon in it. It has been a long time since the last party two weeks ago. You can hardly wait.

The moon comes up softly over Cross Roads, and you are 16. You're excited because you've a new dance to try out tonight and a few new songs to sing at the party. You hurry to bathe and dress. You don't want to be late.

It's spring at Cross Roads, and it doesn't matter what age you are. The lights are on at the school house, and crepe paper is strung across the ceiling. You sit down, but only for a minute. The entertainment is starting. Two couples are hosts each time, but you all take part.

You begin with a "get acquainted" game, and you all rush around hunting peanuts. You bump into each other and laugh. You scramble like a six-year-old whether you're pre-school or 60. And you all have fun together.

There are all kinds of games you play. And if you're very little, and your big, brown eyes grow heavy, you fall asleep against a chair, and your mother lays you on one of the school desks.

If you're sixteen and golden-haired, with a sweet, high voice, you lead the singing, and everyone joins in, with round robins and hymns. If you're a teacher you run around like the others in the games, and the children call you, not Mrs. Edgerton, but Miss Bertha.

If you're any age, you dance folk dances and play games, drink soda, laugh together. You're a part of a community and part of the great and courageous spirit of that community. You don't have time to be restless. You're too busy having fun, mothers and fathers and children all together.

If you're one of the Cross Roads Community, you play and sing together. You stand before all the other little communities as an example of what a small group can do!

NOTICES RECEIVED TO DATE OF CONFERENCES ON RURAL WORK:

June 19-23— Twelfth Annual Conference for Town and Country Pastors, Pennsylvania State College. Wm. Mather, chairman. Cost $16.00.

June 26-30 — Fifth Texas Rural Church Conference, Texas A & M College.

July 10-21 — Fourth Annual Rural Leadership School, Michigan State College, East Lansing. Paul Miller, chairman. Cost $48.00.

Other summer conferences are available. Write Division of Town and Country, 281 Fourth Ave., New York 10. Certain scholarship helps are available.

THE AGED IN RURAL LIFE

Personal and Social Adjustments of 49 Retired Rural Men: Pennsylvania State College School of Agriculture. 1950. 16pp. An objective consideration of the factors that make for contentment in old age, personal and social adjustments, philosophy and evaluation. A valuable study for those interested in the church's relationship to the aged in the parish. The only published study of its kind.

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